

ISSUE 9



Could the Crusades Be Considered a Christian Holy War?

YES: Arthur Jones, from "Memories of Crusades Live on in Today's War," *National Catholic Reporter* (October 26, 2001)

NO: Jonathan Phillips, from "Who Were the First Crusaders?" *History Today* (March 1997)

ISSUE SUMMARY

YES: Editor-at-large Arthur Jones presents a case for calling the Crusades a Christian holy war and finds resonances of that long-ago conflict in today's Muslim-Christian conflicts.

NO: Lecturer in medieval history Jonathan Phillips finds motivations for the Crusades in religious fervor, the desire for wealth, and a family history of pilgrimage, not in holy war.

Arthur Jones begins his essay with President Bush's inadvertent use of the word "crusade" on September 16, 2001 ("This crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a long time)—a word he claims echoed into Muslim memories of centuries of Christian incursions. Point-of-view is pivotal. Christians might view the Crusades as a noble effort to reclaim the central sites of their faith, or as an unfortunate but long-forgotten chapter in world history. Muslims, by contrast, may have fresh memories of "the holy religious war of the Christians" and their own "war against the cross" that began in the eleventh century and continues today.

Christianity began as a persecuted sect in the Roman Empire that took seriously its founder's injunction to "turn the other cheek" and repay evil with good. Early Christians would have no part of war. But by the fourth century, Constantine, the Holy Roman Emperor, had won battles with the cross on his shield and made Christianity the official faith of the Empire. Even against this background, however, papally sanctioned violence was something new, Jones suggests.

Muhammad's revelation from God ignited a fervor on the Arabian Peninsula that swept across north Africa and into Christian Europe, beginning in the seventh century. By 750 it had spread throughout the Byzantine Empire. At least in part, Jones argues, the Crusades can be viewed as a Christian

counteroffensive, designed to take back their conquered territories and reclaim the Holy Land, the site of Jesus's ministry, death, and burial.

Muslims regard both Jews and Christians as People of the Book, praise their prophets—Abraham, Moses, and Jesus—and permit them to worship freely. The higher head tax Jews and Christians had to pay in Muslim-controlled lands was another disincentive to convert them. So, in the Fertile Crescent, Muslims and Christians had lived together for centuries before the First Crusade—in mutual toleration, if not friendship. One key to the ferocity of the First Crusade is its point of origin. Most Frankish knights would have had no contact with Islam. However, their epic poem *The Song of Roland* changed the “enemy” that defeated Charlemagne’s rearguard in the Pyrenees from the Basques, who were the actual victors, into the “treacherous” Muslims of Spain.

Jonathan Phillips situates the Crusades within the social, intellectual, religious, economic, and psychological realities of late eleventh-century Europe, which he calls “one of the most guilt-ridden societies in history.” People, he argues, would have had many reasons for joining a crusade—the promise of salvation, the lure of wealth, and family traditions of pilgrimage. And, Pope Urban II’s original goal was a very specific one—to assist the Byzantine emperor Alexius in his struggle against the Seljuk Turks of Asia Minor. These motivations, Phillips contends, are sufficient to account for the 60,000 who joined the first Crusade. It is not necessary to posit a holy war as motivation.

Fulcher of Chartres, the priest-chaplain of the First Crusade, described “a new path to heaven” and said confidently that those who undertook this “holy war” would experience “forgiveness of sins.” Those who quest for God—in the eleventh century of the twenty-first—believe they will be blessed. During the Seventh Crusade, led by St. Louis, King of France, Yves le Breton reported encountering an old woman who wandered the streets with a dish of fire in her right hand and a bowl of water in her left hand. With the fire, she explained, she would burn up Paradise, until there was nothing left of it. And with the water, she would put out the fires of Hell, until nothing remained of them. “Because,” she said, “I want no one to do good in order to receive the reward of Paradise, or from fear of Hell, but solely out of love of God.”



Memories of Crusades Live on in Today’s War

Crusade!

On Sept. 16, the word shot around the Islamic world. And shocked it. President George W. Bush thought he’d used the term innocently enough. On that Sunday, walking from his helicopter to the White House, he said of U.S. retaliation to the Sept. 11 attacks, “this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a long time.”

As the Muslim uproar swelled, Bush quickly apologized. But damage had been done. The BBC, for example, in its Persian and Uzbek broadcast news services, had translated Bush’s remark in the way the Islamic world understands it, as “the war of those signed with the cross,” and “the holy, religious war of the Christians.” (In Islam’s many national languages, from Arabic to Farsi to Urdu, the Muslims call their defense against the crusaders, “the war against the cross.”)

Only a minority of Muslims actually believe America had declared a “holy war” against them, cautions Paul E. Chevedden of the University of California, Los Angeles. And Georgetown University’s Zahid H. Bukhari, speaking of both Muslims and Westerners, said, “Certain lobbies, certain people, do use the word [crusade] to project what is happening because they have their own agendas to present. They like the terminology and can be more effective because of it.”

To Muslims, whose memory of historic grievances may be sharper than that of most Christians, the concept of a “holy war” has implications lost in history’s mists. To some millions of Muslims within the Islamic world, crusade still means centuries of bloody Western Christian incursions fought over the Holy Land. Those memories are like ghosts dancing to the U.S. drums of war.

NCR talked to historians of religion and those engaged in Muslim-Christian dialogue and, as the globe’s sole superpower searches for one man among the rocks and caves of Islamic Afghanistan, learned lessons for today from the history of the medieval crusades. From today’s perspective, there are some surprises, some odd similarities and parallels.

Christians did indeed at one time have their “holy wars,” accompanied by language that could have come from bin Laden himself.

The historical record tells us that Fulcher of Chartres (1058–1130), priest-chaplain on the first Crusade, wrote in his eyewitness account that this Crusade was a *novum salutaris genus*, “a new path to Heaven.” Those Christians

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who followed this "holy war" path would, wrote Fulcher, experience "full and complete satisfaction" and "forgiveness of sins."

A World Bursting Apart

To Chevedden, however, who is an associate at UCLA's Gustav E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies, the Crusades have to be understood as part of tremendous geo-political, socio-economic and religious shifts underway at the time. "The Mediterranean world of the 11th century was changing in a remarkable manner; it was witnessing the birth of a new world. The Crusades were the product of the sudden and all-transforming change that produced Western European civilization. An old world burst apart, and a new one took its place."

Bukhari, director and principal co-investigator for Georgetown's Muslims in the American Public Square project, and Fr. James Fredericks of Loyola Marymount theology department, see similar shifts underway today. Bukhari explained that during a period of great transformation "the Crusades were a clash of religions. In the transformations of modern times, we have a clash of civilizations. To some extent there is the same connotation, the whole West as a symbol of Christianity, the entire Muslim world as the symbol of Islam."

But what must be taken into account, he said, is the evolution underway. One aspect of that, he said, is "the evolving debate within Islam about living according to Islamic beliefs, to divine guidance. The notion of how to do that has been evolving since World War II, which triggered the end of colonialism. Among Muslim countries and the Muslim world (which includes those Muslims who live as minorities in non-Muslim countries), there is a debate over issues of democracy, civil rights, human rights, the role of women and living with people of other faiths."

And that debate, he said, "will be violent in some places, look absurd in others, be serious in others, but evolve ultimately, hopefully, in a positive direction."

Bukhari, a Pakistani who has lived in the West for 17 years, said that when "looked at in the time period of 30 to 40 years, things are going very much in a positive direction. Especially with those Muslims living in Western societies. But we are talking only about 30 to 40 years. What evolution will the next 30 to 40 years bring?"

Fredericks, a priest of the San Francisco archdiocese whose field is comparative religion, comments, "We Americans are so concerned with the violent [Islamic] fringe, we miss what's going on at a deeper level."

To Fredericks, the geo-politic transformations Islam is signaling are enormous. This is a huge, huge topic. First, Christianity and Islam—you cannot say it about Judaism—are religions that have been at the foundations of empires. Further, Christianity and Islam are the bases of entire cultural outlooks.

Christian nations today are, by and large, secular societies, in which Protestantism was able to adjust more quickly than Roman Catholicism. "Christianity has made its peace—an uneasy truce—with secular culture. Christianity," he continued, "has grudgingly yielded its place at the center of culture. It isn't that anymore."

The peace isn't total, and opposition to the peace does not just come from Christian reactionaries, traditionalists and conservatives. "We see opposition," he said, "not just from the new religious right, though in the culture wars they get all the publicity, but in the theology of liberation. The theology of liberation also says that religious voices, religious values, need to be very public realities at the center of culture."

"The other thing—and it's such a complicated picture," he said, "there is something in the very character of Christianity that resists privatization. Christianity wants to be a very public religion. So when Christianity becomes a private religion, it is in a rather anomalous situation."

The same statement, he said, can be made about Islam. "Islam wants to be a very public force, a very public reality." Islam wants of its very character to be the basis of society. It always has.

"From the beginnings of Islam," said Fredericks, "submitting to Islam meant renouncing one culture that was sinful and violent and discriminatory and based on petty racial and ethnic rivalries, and recognizing there is this universal humanity, universal morality. A powerful conversion takes place from an immoral society to a moral society." In fact, he said, submission—submission to Allah—is what Islam means.

For Islam to accept a privatized place within secular society "is very, very difficult. We in the West tend to presume that this is an inevitable process. I think that's naive."

Fredericks argues that because Christians "slowly and begrudgingly, and with a great deal of violence" more or less worked out a modus vivendi with the secular nation, Muslims will not necessarily follow suit.

"Why should we presume that that's normative?" he asked.

"Alternative Modernities"

Speaking to Bukhari's point about Islam in the recent post-colonial period, Fredericks talked of "alternative modernities," of Islamic states developing in unique and non-Western ways.

He uses Indonesia, the largest of all Islamic nations, as an example. "If one allows, and it is controversial to do so, that Indonesia's Sukarno [1949-1967] and Suharto [1967-1998] regimes were aftermaths connected to Dutch colonialism, then what we're hearing from Indonesia's Muslims today is, 'We want to be a nation. We don't want to go back to the Middle Ages. And—the West doesn't get this—we want to be a modern nation. We just don't want to be modern the way you're modern. We think that's sick.'"

Think of such a development, says Fredericks, in terms "of 'religious nationalism' as an alternative to Western secularism. Islam saying our religious nationalism is a way of being a modern, national state: Economically competitive, a state able to provide basic social services to its population. We want to be a success. But secularism—with all the immorality that comes with it—isn't going to cut it for us. We're not that kind of people. We want to be an Islamic state."

What the world may be witnessing, contends Fredericks, is not just a violent fringe but manifestations of religious nationalism that from Egypt to

Iran to Indonesia "may have more in common with the theology of liberation than we've recognized. Both are a critique of Western secular, capitalist, consumerist, materialist, globalist secularism. And that's something we ought to pay attention to and be respectful of." Like Islam, liberation theology seeks to put Christian values, such as a preferential option for the poor, at the center of culture.

Scott Bartchy, director of the Center for the Study of Religion at UCLA, said Americans need to understand that at the deepest level they have been moving away from cultural values built around honor—shame—still the dominant framework for values around much of the world. In contrast, the United States "has an achievement-guilt culture focused almost entirely on the individual," he said.

"Certainly we have very little sense of honor," he said. "Most Americans will say honor is nice, but give me the check instead. And if we had any shame, we wouldn't have had the last 20 years of U.S. politics."

Bartchy said that in Germany in the 1970s, Chancellor Willi Brandt resigned as a matter of honor when an East German mole penetrated West Germany's security services. In Japan, "CEOs or government officers caught in whatever, resign." By contrast, he said, "in America if you get caught out, you back and fill. You don't resign, you just tough it out."

The 80 percent of the world living with honor-shame values have strict gender divisions and roles, systems that generate enormous competition among the males, and a sense of bonding within the family. "Islam," he said, "has created a sense of what anthropologists call 'fictive' and I choose to call 'surrogate' kinship: It goes beyond the family to create a sense of brotherhood. It's no accident that the extremist group in Egypt is the 'Brotherhood.'"

In many ways, said Bartchy, "Islam, for all the way it looks, is still kind of a thin overlay of ancient tribal cultures." For example, nothing in the Quran or the Islamic tradition supports honor killing of women, yet in some countries women are killed if they have been raped, he said. "If the father isn't strong enough, the brothers are supposed to go out there and kill that woman. And if they can kill her in public it's even better, because that at least eliminates the shame from the family."

The only groups in the United States that live up to these strong honor-shame codes, Bartchy said, are inner-city gangs and the Mafia. They cannot allow themselves or their family to be "dissed, or shamed." Every time they step over the threshold, they are in competition with the world outside. "From the time you're 3 years old until you die, you do and say those things that will bring honor back to your family."

Which, in part, said Bartchy, explains Osama bin Laden's popularity in Afghanistan. "Whatever else he was doing," he said, "Osama was accumulating an enormous amount of honor. Spending his own wealth initially on the widows and orphans of the mujahideen—an enormous contrast to what the royal elites back home in Saudi Arabia were doing."

In bin Laden's eyes, said Bartchy, these Saudis were not sharing, and Islam requires it. As bin Laden and those sympathetic to him looked at the United States, "they saw the ever-increasing gap between the elite—the enormously

rich—and the Americans at the bottom. Then Osama and his allies looked at the Saudi leadership doing the same and reasoned: 'How did Saudis learn that those values are OK? Because they looked to the West.'" (Bartchy left unanswered the next question: "How did the West learn that those values are OK?")

"Basically," he said, "what Muslims in the Near East want is the same things we want. Even the most conservative bring their kids to the United States to be educated. What they can't understand is how we say we're so strong for democracy and participation and yet we continue to prop up regimes in their part of the world they regard as terribly oppressive and corrupt."

At home what bothers Bartchy is the tone of the American popular response, even among his students. They believe, he said, "the only way to look at us is as the victims. We can do anything we damn well please overseas, and that should never have any effect on what comes down."

What the Peeves Really Are

Bush used the word crusade and apologized. He warned against racism and bigotry, and visited with Muslims at Islamic centers. Sound moves?

If Bush wants support, to prove he's not against Islam "the first place you start is at home," said Yvonne Haddad, professor of the history of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at Georgetown University. "And his rhetoric—in the speech to Congress, listening to it as an American, I was impressed. Listening with the other ear, as Muslims overseas would hear it, it was awful: he talked about 'us' and 'them,' you're either with us or against us. He showed no reflection on what the issues, the peeves, really are."

And some of those peeves can be seen as related to the Crusades. Israel occupies the same geographic area the Crusades were about, she said. "Therefore anybody who supports Israel's policies is perceived as continuing the Crusades." And a thousand years after the first one, the Crusades remain a source of contention.

Pressures That Led to an Empire-wide Movement

The Nine Crusades, which took place in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries, were a counteroffensive by Christians against Muslims occupying the Holy Land.

Was the Islamic threat real? "You betcha," said Professor Paul E. Chevedden. "Islamic conquest had taken from Christendom its choicest province—Syria, Egypt, North Africa and Iberia [Spain and Portugal]."

Islam pushed its way north into Italy until it captured Monte Cassino, St. Benedict's monastery, then moved into eastern Switzerland. On the Great St. Bernard Pass, Muslims even captured the abbot of Cluny, France.

The Crusades, in response, were applications of Roman Catholicism's "just war" tradition, said Chevedden of UCLA's Gustav E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies. Islam had the Holy Land, and the pope wanted it back.

A grave pitfall for today, insists Chevedden, would be to view the Crusades in isolation from the world-transforming events in the Mediterranean and in

western Asia at the turn of the second millennium. Those events included pressures from expanding populations, rapidly developing urbanism, intellectual and technological inquiries and advances, plus rising commerce pushing into new areas.

The clash between Christendom and Islam was a 1,000-year struggle, the most protracted conflict in human history. What should not be overlooked, Chevedden said, is that, for the most part, Islam, rather than Christianity, was in the ascendancy.

Scott Bartchy, director of UCLA's Center for the Study of Religion, though well aware of what Islam gave to the West during those 1,000 years, looks at the early heritage of both Christianity and Islam from the perspective of violence/non-violence.

During the first 250 to 300 years of Christianity, it was initially persecuted, then scapegoated through four more tense periods, as it became an empire-wide movement. "Never," emphasized Bartchy, "never once during this period is anybody killed in the name of Jesus. The Christians are not a guerrilla band, they are not social bandits. They stay in the urban environment, gain a reputation not only for helping their own widows and orphans, but others' as well. Not only burying their own dead but—a major deal at that time—other people's as well. They never become violent."

Bartchy called it "remarkable" that Jesus' nonviolence had taken "such a hold" across those early centuries. It was Emperor Constantine's adopting Christianity as the Roman Empire's religion in the fourth century that "wrecked things. He never got it," said Bartchy. "He puts the Chi-Rho symbol on Roman shields, and for the first time Christians start killing people in the name of Jesus."

Bartchy contrasts that Jesus with Islam's Muhammad who, in the early seventh century, "goes into Medina and in effect becomes the civil authority. Functionally, he's an innovator, a Jesus of Nazareth and a Constantine, all rolled into one."

Bartchy said Muhammad "never ever renounces violence, and for all the fine things in the Islamic tradition, there's never been any serious commitment to nonviolence. In a war, if you follow the prophet, you shouldn't hurt women or children. Or trees. Quite charming that. And the violence should be defensive."

Bartchy said that after the Crusades the Near Eastern Islamic world felt itself transgressed upon, "and there's a certain victim mentality." Culturally, he said, Muslims saved much from the Greek philosophers that the West later appropriated. Technologically Islam held its own, even into the 16th and 17th centuries. "But then the West got the technological edge in military stuff and began pushing," said Bartchy, "and the Muslims again get into the mentality of being victims."

Consequently, Bartchy summarized, today "some of the more extreme people have given themselves permission to do almost anything in the name of defense. And that's what we see."

The Crusades were religious, political and economic. The First Millennium had just ended, the 11th century was the setting of an enormous spiritual revival. For centuries, with the Holy Land under benign Islamic rule, pilgrims

traveled together to Jerusalem under arms to protect themselves from robbers. Confessors in that era regularly gave pilgrimages as a penance, so ensuring the safety of pilgrims was one element of the Crusades.

Other elements included merchants in Italian cities wanting Eastern trading outlets and the ambitions of chivalrous knights—high-born youths looking for action and conquest.

There also was a shift within Islam precipitating the Crusades. The more restrictive Turkish Muslims had taken over the Holy Land, and the pope, disenchanted with the warring European nobles' inability to form a coalition to battle Islam, brought his own unifying authority to bear.

The scene was set, and all the elements combined in the urge to free the Holy Land from Islam. Thus nine Crusades, each generally less successful than the one before it.

Crusaders Went from Victory to Disaster

In box scores, there were nine Crusades between 1095 and 1272. The outcome was Crusaders 2, Muslims 5, plus two negotiated ties. And the Muslims remained in control.

The Crusades (1095–1272) got their name from the crosses Pope Urban II distributed in 1095 after he called on the factious European kings and princes to band together and recover the Holy Sepulcher from the Muslim Seljuk Turks.

They agreed. It would be the first of nine crusades.

Even as the potential first Crusaders were looking into strategy and logistics, peasants in France heard the papal call. Less worried than their leaders about tactics and supplies, several thousand started marching. They resupplied themselves by sacking Belgrade. German peasants set out and financed themselves by attacking Jews.

At Constantinople, what was left of these ragtag bands joined forces, sailed to Jerusalem, dispersed the Turks and declared a victory.

The European nobility finally set off, led by Raymond IV of Toulouse and Bishop Ademar. The First Crusade (1096–99) took Nicea, Antioch and consolidated Western control over what they now called the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, with Godfrey of Bouillon as ruler.

The Muslims retaliated. The Second Crusade (1147–49) failed to recapture cities taken by the Turks; the Third Crusade (1189–91) failed to retake Jerusalem, which was back in Muslim hands. But Saladin decreed Christians could have access to the Holy Sepulcher.

The Fourth Crusade (1220–04) got bogged down in the more profitable venture of fighting Venice, sacking Constantinople, crushing the Byzantine Empire and establishing the Latin Empire of Constantinople.

Quite disastrous was the 1202 Children's Crusade, led by two young peasants. Stephen in France and Nicolas in Germany led several thousand children out of their homelands and into starvation and disease, and into the arms of adults who sold them into slavery and other fates worse than death.

The second longest crusade, the Fifth Crusade (1218–21) was an unsuccessful war against Egypt, and the Sixth Crusade (1228–29), which eschewed

military arms, was led by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II who negotiated a degree of Christian control over the holy sites.

France's Louis IX led the next two crusades, the Seventh (1248-50) and Eighth (1270), with no noticeable gains. Louis died in North Africa, and the Eighth Crusade was called off. The English launched the Ninth Crusade (1271-72) under Prince Edward. It changed nothing, though the prince later became King Edward I.

Jonathan Phillips

Who Were the First Crusaders?



Who were the people who answered Urban II's call to crusade between 1096 and 1099? Jonathan Phillips investigates their origins and motives.

The canons of the council summarised the offer made by Urban II as he launched the First Crusade:

Whoever, for devotion alone, not to gain honour or money, goes to Jerusalem to liberate the Church of God can substitute this journey for all penance.

In other words, if people fought God's enemies on earth and completed a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, their actions would receive a spiritual reward of remarkable magnitude. Urban blended the familiar ideas of pilgrimage and penance with the more radical notion of papally-sanctioned violence to produce what a contemporary writer described as "a new means of attaining salvation." He followed the speech at Clermont with an extensive preaching tour through France and by the dispatch of letters and legations elsewhere in Europe.

The response to his appeal was remarkable, and in total almost 60,000 people set out for the Holy Land. The population of Europe at the end of the eleventh century is estimated to have been around 20 million, so clearly the vast majority of people chose to remain in the West. If, however, one adds contact through ties of family and friendship then it is clear that the crusade touched the lives of millions.

Fulcher of Chartres, a participant in the crusade, wrote that people "of any and every occupation" took the cross. He also commented "whoever heard of such a mixture of languages in one army, since there were French, Flemings, Frisians, Gauls, Allobroges [Savoynards], Lotharingians, Allemanni [South Germans and Swiss], Bavarians, Normans, English, Scots, Aquitanians, Italians, Danes, Apulians, Iberians, Bretons, Greeks and Armenians." Representatives of the last two groups probably joined the expedition en route, but the remainder had been attracted by Urban's initial call to arms. The crusade therefore appealed to people from almost every level of society right across Christian Europe. The purpose here is to give some insight into who the First Crusaders were, to explain why they took the cross, and to understand the importance of identifying those who took part in the expedition.

The reasons for such a wide-ranging response are complex. Our distance from events and the nature of the surviving evidence mean that we can never

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achieve a perfect insight into a crusader's mind. We should not necessarily look for a single motive in determining an individual's desire to take the cross, although certain themes emerge more clearly than others. An understanding of the actions of each crusader must be grounded in the cultural, political and economic context of the time.

Spiritual concerns were a prominent factor governing people's lives in the late eleventh century. It was an intensely religious age; pilgrimage and monastic life flourished, and donations to ecclesiastical institutions were increasingly commonplace. Christian Europe was also one of the most guilt-ridden societies in history. Sin was ubiquitous in everyday life and the images of fire and torture so frequently depicted on churches reinforced the fear of eternal damnation. The need for all people—whether rich or poor, nobles or labourers—to atone for their actions helps to explain the level of enthusiasm for the First Crusade and also the crusaders' determination to fulfil their vows by completing the journey to Jerusalem.

The pope's original conception of the crusade was for a compact contingent of knights to assist Emperor Alexius of Byzantium in his struggle against the Seljuk Turks of Asia Minor before marching on to the Holy Land. His appeal was directed, therefore, towards the knightly classes of his native France, a region of weak central authority and endemic lawlessness which was often initiated by the knights themselves. The crusade may have been one way to channel this violence elsewhere as well as giving the knights an opportunity of salvation. The knights responded in large numbers and formed the backbone of the Christian army.

As we have seen, however, Urban's offer was so attractive that almost all elements of society were represented on the crusade. The most notable exception to this was the absence of any kings. Urban regarded the crusade as a papally-directed enterprise and had not explicitly invited the secular monarchs to become involved. In any case, Philip I of France was excommunicated on account of an adulterous relationship with the Countess of Anjou; Henry IV of Germany was the papacy's principal opponent in a bitter struggle concerning the supremacy of lay versus sacred power (known as the Investiture Contest), and William Rufus was too entangled in the government of England to be particularly interested. It was not until the crusade of Sigurd of Norway (1107–10), that a king participated in a campaign in the Holy Land, although it should be noted that the rulers of Spain had long been involved in the Reconquista, their own struggle against the Muslims.

While the non-participation of kings may be regarded as part of Urban's design, the pope had not anticipated that his call would appeal to monks. He wrote "we do not want those who have abandoned the world and vowed themselves to spiritual warfare either to bear arms or to go on this journey; we go so far as to forbid them to do so." Other churchmen such as priests and clerks, were permitted to join as long as they secured the permission of their bishop, and in any case, some religious officials were needed to administer to the crusaders' spiritual needs during the course of the expedition. Urban's message also struck a deep chord with the wider populace, including women, children, the old, the infirm and the poor. Clearly these groups would hinder

the progress of an army because they had to be fed and protected. The pope tried to limit their involvement by requiring people to consult their parish priests before taking their vows, but this measure failed and the crusade set out accompanied by many noncombatants. In the course of the crusade the majority of this anonymous mass perished through starvation or disease, deserted, or were enslaved.

It is among the members of the noble and knightly classes that we can begin to pinpoint the individuals who took the cross. In part this is because, as men of standing, their deeds feature in the narrative accounts of the crusade. Some, such as the southern Italian knight, Hugh the Beseck, are mentioned on only one occasion for an act of particular bravery: in this case because Hugh had single-handedly defended a tower for an entire day against Turkish attacks during the siege of Antioch. For the leaders of the major contingents, however, there is a much fuller picture, particularly when their force happens to have included a chronicler. The anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum*, for example, was a member of Bohemond of Taranto's army, and Raymond of Aguiliers was the chaplain to Raymond of Saint-Gilles, the Count of Toulouse. The latter writer noted "It seems too tiresome to write of each journey . . . so we have taken care to write of the Count of Saint-Gilles without bothering with the others." In the case of Hugh of Vermandois, younger brother of Philip I of France, there is much less information because, as far as we are aware, no member of his contingent wrote an account of the crusade.

While narrative works provide the majority of our material they are not the only source of information for the crusade. In recent years the use of charters has enhanced our understanding of the motivation, financing and family networks of the crusaders. It is the nature of eleventh-century charters which holds the key to this. Charters from later periods tend to convey only a bare minimum of information, such as names, places, dates, and the exact subject of the transaction. Some charters from the time of the First Crusade, however, provide more of a clue to the hopes and fears of individual crusaders, as well as basic factual information.

Crusading was extremely expensive. To equip oneself with chainmail, horses and supplies would cost a great deal—some estimates suggest over four years' annual income. However, the recent experience of the Norman Conquest, for example, would have given people some idea of the resources needed to fight a large-scale and lengthy military expedition. In order to finance the crusade it was often necessary to mortgage or sell lands and rights to the church. The records of these transactions give further indication as to who took part and how they raised money for the journey. Incidentally, the issue of cost is another reason why the old cliché of crusaders being freebooting younger sons is deeply suspect, simply because such men would have been unable to afford to set out in the first instance.

In fact, largely through the use of charters, all sorts of combinations of family members can be found on the crusade. For example, Hugh of Merysur-Seine mortgaged lands at Rosnay to the abbey of Molesme in order to pay for both his own and his brother's journey. Jonathan Riley-Smith has traced the remarkable involvement of the Monthery clan. One member, Miles of

Bray, was accompanied on the First Crusade by his son, Guy, his brother-in-law, Walter of St. Valery, and two of Walter's sons; his nephew, Baldwin (later Baldwin II of Jerusalem), and two other nephews—Humberge of Le Puiset and Everard III of Le Puiset—were amongst members of the network to take the cross in 1095–96.

Some crusader families had an existing tradition of pilgrimage to the Holy Land which may have formed a further reason for their taking the cross. For example, both the great-grandfather and the grandfather of the First Crusader, Adhemar III of Limoges, had been to Jerusalem in the course of the eleventh century. The influence of pilgrimage is a theme more thoroughly explored in the work of Marcus Bull.

Although the religious motivation of the First Crusaders should be emphasised, it would be naive to argue that other interests were absent. When a noble embarked upon the crusade it was inevitable that he would be accompanied by his household retainers. He would have to provide support for his knights, squires and servants. All were an integral part of a medieval army and, because of this, ties of allegiance and loyalty should be advanced as a further reason for taking the cross, even though such a commitment was, in theory, a strictly voluntary exercise. The desire for land was a further motive, but it did not apply to all the crusaders. Many charters contain clauses detailing financial arrangements that would come into force only if the crusader died during the expedition. Such measures suggest that the participants were well aware of the dangers of the crusade, but hoped to return home once the vow was completed. Two brothers, Bernard and Odo, entered into an agreement with the abbey of Cluny:

For the remission of our sins, setting out with all the others on the journey to Jerusalem, we have made over for 100 solidi . . . a manor known as Busart. We are making this on the condition that if, on the pilgrimage that we are undertaking, we may die, the manor may remain in perpetuity under the control of . . . the monastery of Cluny. But if we may return . . . we may keep it in our lifetime, but after our death it may not come into the possession of our heirs . . . but will pass to Cluny.

The fact that the Crusader States were seriously undermined throughout their existence also indicates that relatively few crusaders chose to remain in the Levant and become settlers. Some men, however, were explicit in their intention never to return to the West and clearly planned to carve out new territories for themselves in the East. Raymond of Saint-Gilles was rumoured to be one such person. The French knight Achard of Montmerle might also have been planning to stay in the Holy Land. The charter detailing his agreement with the abbey of Cluny includes the clause "if I die, or if I choose to remain in those lands [the Levant] . . ." shows at least an awareness of the possibility of settling in the East, a course of action which would presumably necessitate the taking of land.

The need to repay debts incurred in paying for the expedition, coupled with poor economic conditions—a series of droughts and bad harvests had marked the early 1090s—suggests that the desire for money may have been

a priority for the crusaders. Perhaps the search for salvation and the wish for financial gain seem too mutually exclusive in our eyes. One has only to think of TV evangelism to shudder at the potential for abuse in this connection, yet it is not improbable or contradictory that pious men took the cross also hoping to improve their financial and material prospects. There must also have been crusaders for whom the wish to accumulate wealth predominated. The sources indicate that such people must have been gravely disappointed. There is remarkably little evidence of people returning from the crusade with newfound riches. One rare example is reported by Abbot Suger of Saint Denis. He wrote that Count Guy of Rochefort "returned from the expedition to Jerusalem renowned and rich," an ironic reversal of Urban II's injunction against crusaders seeking honour or money.

People certainly brought back relics from the Holy Land. Lord Riou of Lohac, for example, acquired a fragment of the True Cross and bequeathed it to his local church when he died in 1101. But the experience of the First Crusade does not suggest that it was the route to easy profit. None-the-less, the narrative sources contain frequent reports of the crusaders seeking booty. After the siege of Ma'arrat an Nu'man (December 1098) Muslim graves were dug up and the bodies slit open to check if any treasure had been swallowed. Acts of a similarly brutal nature were repeated elsewhere. The most likely explanation for this behaviour is that substantial sums of money were required to keep the expedition going.

The duration and rigour of the campaign exhausted the resources of the vast majority. Crusaders endured terrible suffering during the march across Asia Minor and at the siege of Antioch (October 1097–June 1098). Food prices became grossly inflated and losses of horses and equipment were enormous. It is an important distinction, therefore, that acts of greed were usually initiated in response to the need to survive, rather than the long-term motivation to accumulate treasure. For those interested solely in money, the cost of warfare and the duration of the expedition meant that the depredation of land closer to home had to be a safer option than going on crusade. If some had set out hoping to acquire untold riches it seems that the hardships of the expedition soon deterred them because throughout the course of the crusade a stream of deserters left the main army unable to endure the experience.

News of the expedition to Jerusalem spread rapidly across Northern and Central Europe and also down through Italy and to Sicily. The pope accepted the reality of the situation and began to dispatch letters of instruction and encouragement to these areas. The only region where he actively discouraged recruitment was the Iberian peninsula because he did not want people distracted from the "reconquista," although we know that some Spanish crusaders ignored him and travelled to Jerusalem. When the forces of the First Crusade began to assemble in 1096 the racial mix of the armies is an impressive testimony to the power of Urban's appeal. Another indication of the range of participants involved is provided by Raymond of Aguliers. He relates that in the Provençal contingent alone no less than seven different currencies were in circulation. He mentioned the use of coins from Lucca, Chartres, Le Mans, Melgueil, Le Puy, Valence and Poitou. Currency from the first five places have

been discovered in a single collection at Antioch and tentatively associated with the siege that took place there.

Because almost every region of Latin Christendom was represented on the first Crusade difficulties emerged in communication and leadership. Problems also arose on account of hostility between regional contingents of the army. An episode related by Ralph of Caen—a visitor to the Levant soon after the first Crusade—serves to illustrate the tensions that sometimes broke out in the course of the campaign. As morale sagged during the siege of Antioch, gangs of northern and southern French grouped up on linguistic lines to forage for supplies. They assaulted or freed their captives according to the language they spoke, while those responding in tongues other than Occitan or a northern French dialect were spared as neutrals.

In the course of the crusade and afterwards, the Franks (as they were known collectively) established a series of states in the Levant. During the early years of settlement the polyglot nature of the crusader army was, to some extent, distilled. In some states the origins of the dominant Latin Christian element reflected the ancestry of the particular leader who had based himself there. Bohemond of Taranto's principality of Antioch had a strong contingent of Normans from Southern Italy. Similarly, because it was Raymond of Saint-Gilles who had set up the county of Tripoli, the area had a Provençal influence. The kingdom of Jerusalem, in consequence of its spiritual importance, attracted settlers from a wider number of regions and represented, therefore, a more diverse grouping.

The creation of the Frankish states, each with its own character and links to the West, as well as the over-arching bond of Latin Christianity, meant that strong ties existed between the settlers and their co-religionists in Europe. As the Muslim jihad gathered momentum in the course of the twelfth century, the Franks in the East needed military and financial help. It is interesting to note that traditions of crusading and ties of kinship between those in the Holy Land and the West were two ideas that the settlers emphasised in their attempts to secure support.

Pope Eugenius III drew attention to the concept of crusading ancestry in *Quantum Praedecessores* his appeal for the Second Crusade (1145–49). He wrote:

It will be seen as a great token of nobility and uprightness if those things acquired by the efforts of the fathers are vigorously defended by you, their good sons. But if, God forbid, it comes to pass differently, then the bravery of the fathers will have proved to be diminished in the sons. We impress upon you . . . to defend in this way the Eastern Church, which was freed from their [the Muslims'] tyranny, as we have said before by the spilling of your fathers' blood.

In effect this amounted to an appeal to those families with traditions of crusading. The counts of Flanders were a group particularly receptive to such a message. They also had close family ties with the settlers. When Count Thierry took the cross in 1146 he was perpetuating a well-established line of involvement with the Holy Land. His grandfather, Robert I, had mounted a large-scale

pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1087–90. His uncle, Count Robert II, was one of the leading figures on the First Crusade. His cousin, Count Charles the Good, had visited Jerusalem around 1107, and was probably offered the throne of the kingdom of Jerusalem in 1123–24. In 1134 Thierry gained close links with the house of Jerusalem through his marriage to Sibylla of Anjou, a daughter of King Fulk. Thierry had also journeyed to the Holy Land in 1139 and seems to have planned another trip in 1142 only to turn back at an early stage.

An awareness of the identity of the First Crusaders reveals the impact of Pope Urban's call on the people of Europe in 1095–96. But answering the question "Who were the First Crusaders?" can tell us more. We are able to use the answer to start following traditions of crusading and the creation of family ties between the Levant and the West and from this information we have a better understanding of the nature of Latin settlement in the East and the subsequent history of the crusades.



POSTSCRIPT



Could the Crusades Be Considered a Christian Holy War?

With the emergence of Islamic revivalism in the modern world, the historical relationships between the West and the Muslim world have taken center stage. Are the Crusades at the root of this contemporary conflict? The Islamic world has always viewed the Crusades as an invasion of its territory by a foreign power; the West has not shared this perspective. This issue asks: To what extent can the Crusades be viewed as a Christian Holy War? As the West responds to radical Islamic-inspired terrorism today with shock and outrage, is it not possible that a millennium ago, Middle Eastern Muslims responded in the same manner to the European crusaders?

Both struggles spring, at least in part, from religious motivation present. Christian crusaders believed they were fighting a just war in the service of God: securing indulgences for services rendered; and the ultimate prize, gaining the right to eternal salvation. With a slight change in language, we hear the same promises in Islamic revivalism—fighting the infidels in the name of Allah; participating in a fierce struggle between the forces of good and evil; and ultimately acquiring a special place in heaven as martyrs of the faith. Failure to hear these resonances might prevent us from learning a lesson from history.

For sources on the Crusades from a Muslim viewpoint, see: Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (Schocken Books, 1985); Francesco Gabrieli, ed., *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (University of California Press, 1984); and Carol Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Routledge, 2000). Karen Armstrong's *Holy War: The Crusades and their Impact on Today's World* (Anchor Books, 2001) is a Western source that speaks of the Crusades in an objective and critical manner, especially their links with contemporary conflicts among Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East.

As far as general sources on the Crusades are concerned, start with Steven Runciman's three-volume work *A History of the Crusades*, 4th ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1954). Jonathan Riley-Smith's *The First Crusaders*, 1095–1131 (Cambridge University Press, 1997) represents current scholarship. Smith states that the Crusades "drew on the tradition of Pilgrimage to Jerusalem . . . and pious violence" as motivating forces. He also points out that many of the Crusaders from the times he researched came from the same families and clans, and concludes that the sustenance they received from these ties helped make the Crusades possible. A readable, popular account of the Crusades, which features many interesting illustrations and useful maps, is W. B. Bartlett, *God Will It: An Illustrated History of the Crusades* (Oxford University Press, 1999). Another general source is Thomas F. Madden, *A Concise History of the Crusades* (Roman & Littlefield, 1999).